

Promoting Digital Pathways to Opportunity

Questions & Answers

Attached are questions and answers submitted at the March 10, and March 17, 2017 Pre-Submittal briefings and via email to procurement@nola.gov.

1. Why is the City pursuing a problem-based approach to addressing digital equity?

We are looking for creative solutions that engage local stakeholders in finding ways to leverage New Orleans culture, organizations, and shared experiences to bring technology to people who are under-represented in technology. Because this format is non-prescriptive, it provides Responders the flexibility to develop solutions to meet the needs of New Orleanians.

2. What other cities are addressing the Digital Divide?

Other cities working to address digital literacy and the digital divide are Austin, Seattle, San Francisco, Atlanta, New York City, Kansas City, Chicago, Boston, and Los Angeles. Each city takes a unique approach to this issue.

3. What is Citymart's role? Can they help me put together my response?

Citymart is our partner in this Challenge. They helped us design the Challenge and they are assisting with outreach to potential national and international Responders who will partner with local Responders. We hope that partnership between solution providers from outside New Orleans and local Responders will help non New Orleans-based Responders to understand the local context while expanding local capacity to address digital equity issues.

4. Do Responders need previous tech-related or government experience?

No, we are looking for people who understand the problem to develop great solutions to the problem.

5. The RFI says that the City could choose not to pilot a solution. How likely is the City to pilot a solution? Is it worth my time preparing a very detailed / comprehensive submittal?

Yes, the City could choose not to pilot a solution if none of the submittals meet the needs of New Orleanians. However, the City is eager to identify great solutions and to partner with solution providers to implement those solutions and bring technology to underrepresented New Orleanians. For selected solutions, the City will work with solution providers to identify funding and in-kind resources, which could be provided by the City or another entity. Therefore, submittals should include any requests for in-kind resources.

6. Does the City have a specific number of solutions it will choose? If you receive multiple excellent submittals, could the City choose to pilot more than one?

No, the City does not have a pre-determined number of solutions it hopes to find. Yes, the City could pilot multiple solutions. The number of solutions selected for pilot will depend upon the quality of the submittals, and the availability of funding and City staff to manage projects.

If the City receives multiple great Responses, it could invite the creators of individual submittals to partner to create an even stronger submittal and allow more Responders to pilot solutions.

Promoting Digital Pathways to Opportunity

Questions & Answers

7. **Explain how the City would choose an organization(s) to pilot its/their proposed solution(s) (ie - how are we evaluate responses).**

The City will evaluate submittals based on multiple criteria. These include creativity, sustainability & financial viability, impact on the target population, how well the submittal leverages local organizations, and how well the submittal leverages Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBEs), which is critical to connect to the target population and utilize the innovation and creativity that DBEs can bring to this effort. The City's [Office of Supplier Diversity](#) maintains a list of local DBE firms. There is also a link to their webpage from the Challenge webpage.

8. **NOLA is thinking about piloting a solution but what if my solution can make the case for better impact and cost-effectiveness with a citywide rollout?**

Yes, the City also will consider a citywide rollout for solutions. If you propose a citywide rollout, please explain why a citywide rollout is a better solution than a pilot.

9. **How will chosen Responder(s) enter into an agreement with the City? How will the pilot be set up (i.e., timeline, location, partners, etc.)?**

The City could move forward with Cooperative Endeavor Agreements (CEAs), which are documents that codify an agreement between the City and an entity or multiple entities. Specifics like timeline, location, and partners would be discussed with solution providers to determine what is feasible. You can find a template CEA on the Challenge webpage

The City also could choose to release an RFP. You can find information about City of New Orleans RFPs on the [Purchasing website](#).

10. **Is there money available for this project? How much?**

While the City realizes that different solutions require differing amounts of funding, The City is not providing a target budget for this project. It is incumbent upon Responders to demonstrate the type of solution they can provide at a particular funding level. Responders are free to include options at various funding levels.

The City may be able to provide money from the General Fund to support the deployment of chosen solutions. The amount of money that could be available has not been determined.

The City has timed the Digital Equity Challenge to allow chosen solutions to apply for a [Wisner Grant](#). The City would offer solution providers assistance with their Wisner Grant application. The City cannot guarantee that any selected Responder(s) who choose to apply for a Wisner Grant will receive one. Any Responders who receive a Wisner Grant would have to re-apply for a Wisner Grant each year to receive additional funding beyond the first year grant. The City also can provide in-kind resources.

Promoting Digital Pathways to Opportunity

Questions & Answers

11. Please expand upon what you mean by sustainable? Do solutions need to have long-term funding? Can solutions charge residents for services and/or utilize external grant funds?

Financial viability is important. The City will look favorably on solutions that include a long term plan to pay for themselves. Potential funding from the City is likely to be one-time money.

Yes, solutions can charge fees for services and/or leverage external grant funds. New Orleans has private sector, philanthropic, and non-profit entities that fund equity work and private sector, philanthropic, and non-profit entities that do equity work. Research should help you find possible partners whether you look to perform the work or pay for it.

Please remember - many of the people targeted by this Challenge will have a limited ability to pay. A fee would depress participation by the people we seek to help. It seems more feasible for Responses to charge fees to venues and organizations rather than individual program participants.

While Responders do not have to produce a signed agreement with private funders with their Responses, they should include information about the private funder in the Response and feel confident that the funder will participate should the Response be chosen to pilot.

12. Please tell us about the Broadband Fiber Initiative.

Using funding from the Ford Foundation, the City is working with Foundation for Louisiana, Sewerage and Water Board, and a consultant to design an institutional fiber network that will connect City facilities. The City hopes to leverage high-speed internet to improve the provision of city services and to offer digital skills training to the community in city facilities. Sewerage and Water Board will use the fiber to help manage its infrastructure.

Here's the link to the RFP used to solicit fiber network design services.

<http://www.foundationforlouisiana.org/news/84/wanted-consultant-to-help-design-fiber-network-in-new-orleans>.

13. Please provide information on other Internet access and digital equity initiatives.

In addition to the institutional fiber network, the City has a technology workforce development program, [Bootup NOLA](#).

14. Can a company partner with another company to develop a submittal? What about public-private partnership?

Yes, the City encourages partnerships. Partnerships can include individuals, private firms, non-profits, philanthropies, government entities, etc. Any Cooperative Endeavor Agreement that could result from the Digital Equity Challenge is itself a form of public-private partnership between the City and the other entity(ies).

15. Can a solution start with a small team and then expand the size of the team as needed?

Yes. If a solution requires this approach, please clearly explain any project phasing and/or change in team composition over the duration of the pilot period.

Promoting Digital Pathways to Opportunity

Questions & Answers

16. Can a Responder submit more than one solution?

Yes. Responders can submit multiple solutions and can partner with different organizations as part of different submissions. For example, Responder A could partner with Responder B on a solution and with Responder C on a different solution.

17. Can individuals register with Buyspeed?

Yes, the tax-id for an individual is his/her social security number. You can use the Buyspeed registration guide on the Challenge webpage to help you register in Buyspeed. The guide includes specific instructions for individuals and entities based outside the United States. If you have additional questions, please email procurement@nola.gov.

18. Is Buyspeed registration mandatory?

No. Responders are not required to register in Buyspeed. However, we encourage Responders to register in Buyspeed, which the City uses to improve management of the process of securing goods and services.

19. How will the City facilitate connections between potential Responders and selected Responders?

The City will share contact information for people who attended the web briefings in person and online to facilitate partnership to create submittals. After choosing submittals to pilot, the City also may facilitate partnerships between the creators of complementary solutions.

20. The Digital Equity Challenge targets multiple populations who are underrepresented in technology. Is there a group that is more “left out”? Should solutions be broad (serve all groups underrepresented in technology) or targeted to specific underrepresented groups?

Children are often the target population of digital equity initiatives. We’d like solutions to target other people who are underrepresented in technology, many of whom are more difficult to reach. The City wants Responders to create solutions to reach the harder to reach people on the wrong side of the Digital Divide.

21. Where is the City piloting digital skills classes?

The City is offering a New Orleans inspired version of the [Tech Goes Home](#) digital skills curriculum to adult learners through a pilot program at City Hall. The course focuses on helping people access the internet in general, online government services, and productivity tools. Currently, volunteer instructors from the ITI department teach colleagues in other city departments and participants in STRIVE, the City’s workforce development program. The City is also working with local churches to test the ability of other organizations to adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of the people they serve.

Long-term, we would like to recruit a pool of volunteer instructors so we can expand the program. We anticipate working with the New Orleans Public Library on this effort.

Promoting Digital Pathways to Opportunity

Questions & Answers

22. Are you partnering with workforce development to help provide people with skills so they can access better paying jobs?

Yes, [BootUpNOLA](#) is a direct partnership with the Network for Economic Opportunity, which oversees workforce development for New Orleans. BootUpNOLA offers non-traditional paths to technology employment like apprenticeships and coding boot camps. We work with local tech employers to provide program graduates with access to jobs. Ideally, people interested in tech careers could move from digital skills training to specialized training for tech jobs to well-paying employment.

23. Is there an opportunity to present a rough sketch of the technology solution my company would propose to the City of New Orleans for a reaction before making a decision to do the full application?

No, City staff will not preview Responses to provide feedback prior formal submission of a proposed solution. However, potential Responders can submit questions via email to procurement@nola.gov.

24. What if I require hard-copy materials?

You can access a printable flyer on the Challenge webpage. You can email procurement@nola.gov if you need us to print paper flyers for you.

25. Where can I find the RFP template? Information about the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) program?

You can find the RFP template and past RFPs on the [procurement website](#). You can contact the Procurement Office with questions via email at procurement@nola.gov or 504-658-1559.

You can access information about the City's DBE goals and program on the [Office of Supplier Diversity website](#), via email at supplierdiversity@nola.gov or at 504-658-4904. Staff can speak to you about ways to partner with New Orleans DBE firms.

26. Should solutions target general IT skills or specific skills like crypto-currency?

Wider applicability is more useful. While targeted skills like crypto-currency are likely to become more important in the future, the City would like solutions to be accessible to people who may be accessing technology for the first time.

27. Is the City interested in solutions that connect residents to mobile technology?

The City hopes to improve the competitiveness of non-tech users. While mobile technology provides Internet access, it is inadequate for many tasks like creating a resume, applying for a job, or doing homework which are hard to complete on a smartphone. Consequently, people with only mobile Internet access are not as competitive. Therefore, the City prefers solutions that improve familiarity with the Internet via desktop, laptop, and tablet solutions.

Promoting Digital Pathways to Opportunity

Questions & Answers

28. Is the City only interested in connecting residents to employment?

No, we are interested in helping people learn to leverage technology to improve their life outcomes. This includes using the internet for many tasks other than acquiring and performing a job like managing their money, researching topics that interest them, connecting with other people, or participating in civil society.